
Meeting	Decision Session - Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects and Equalities
Date	19 March 2024
Present	Councillor Lomas (Executive Member)
In Attendance	David Walker (Head of Customer and Exchequer Services) Susan Wood (Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager) Laura Williams (Assistant Director Customer, Communities and Inclusion)

17. Declarations of Interest (10:03)

The Executive Member was asked to declare, at this point in the meeting, any personal interests, not included on the Register of Interests, or any prejudicial or disclosable pecuniary interests that she might have had in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

18. Minutes (10:03)

Resolved: That the minutes of the Decision Sessions of the Executive Member for Finance, Performance, Major Projects, and Equalities held on 24 January 2024 and 21 February 2024 be approved and signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

19. Public Participation (10:03)

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

20. Council Tax Debt Pilot (10:03)

The Head of Customer and Exchequer Services outlined the report noting that the pilot for was for York residents with potentially complex issues using council tax debt as a way to engage with residents to explore and try and support the broader problems. In terms of council tax debt he said that the council would look at texting residents regarding the payment of council

tax arrears and the team would be looking at the wording used in council tax reminders. The Welfare Benefits and Strategic Partnership Manager explained the ongoing work for council tax recovery in the context of its legal framework. She detailed work undertaken council teams and other partners in supporting residents.

The Executive Member welcomed the report and commented that she was impressed by the compassionate support and multiagency work supporting council tax. She was interested to see the impact of the changing of wording on reminders regarding council tax recovery and she was pleased to see the input of the Poverty Truth Commission on the pilot. She then;

Resolved: That approval be given to:

1. Set up a voluntary non-cost multi-agency debt group including community sector partners – to look in more detail during 2024 at all the issues raised by residents in the debt pilot.
2. The establishment of non-cost debt surgeries at West Offices following issue of Council Tax (CT) reminders during 2024 – there is little resource for one-to-one support across the city so establishing a surgery with partners may help in dealing with a larger number of residents issues.
3. To issue text messages to all residents getting CT reminders about continuing to pay something and inviting them to attend a debt surgery. This is to help prevent residents getting further into arrears through the debt recovery process and provide broader advice and support.
4. To review the wording on CT reminders and summons and pilot alternative wording to see if there is any beneficial effect. This also responds to and supports recent comments from the Poverty Truth Commission.

Reason: In order to provide immediate support at the point a resident may fall into debt following good practice early intervention; and to help residents affected by debt and address the broader linked issues within our communities.

Cllr Lomas, Executive Member

[The meeting started at 10.03 am and finished at 10.14 am].